

8

(Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta

The Discourse to Potaliya (the Houselord) | M 54

Theme: The true meaning of renunciation

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2012

1 A study analysis**1.1 SUTTA VERSIONS**

1.1.1 The (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta, the Discourse to Potaliya (the houselord), recounts the Buddha explaining to the houselord Potaliya what it means to truly renounce all worldly affairs. This Sutta has a Chinese parallel in the Madhyama Āgama.¹ A few lines of it are preserved in Sanskrit fragments.² The (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta and its Chinese parallel report that Potaliya, who fancies himself to be a renunciant, is offended because the Buddha addresses him as a “houselord.”³ [§§3.1-3.7]

1.1.2 The Madhyama Āgama version adds that Potaliya, before meeting the Buddha, regularly visits recluses and brahmins in parks and groves, telling them that he has left all worldly affairs behind, which is also the notion, albeit false, of these recluses and brahmins themselves.⁴

According to both the Majjhima Nikāya and Madhyama Āgama versions, Potaliya feels that he should not be called a houselord, because he has left behind all worldly affairs, having handed over his wealth to his children and living merely on what he needs to subsist.⁵

1.1.3 The Buddha, however, explains to Potaliya that “**leaving behind all worldly affairs**” or renouncing requires more than that. Potaliya is keen to hear the Buddha’s explanations [§3.8]. According to the Madhyama Āgama version, he shows his interest by even discarding his walking stick and sandals, and then requesting the Buddha with joined palms in respectful salutation to explain the matter. At the close of the teaching, he goes for refuge.⁶

1.2 MORAL TRAINING: THE 8 ABSTENTIONS

1.2.1 Comparative lists. Both the Pali and the Chinese versions report that the Buddha then lists **8 qualities** that lead to our truly leaving behind or cutting off worldly affairs [§4]. The two versions agree

¹ The parallel is MĀ 203 @ T1.773a-775b, which agrees with the Pali version on taking the name of its protagonist as title, rendered as 瞞利多, *būliduō* (pOli^hta: Pulleyblank 1991:42, 85, 188), which reverses the second and third syllables, and omits the third, of the Pali name. (This omission, observes Analayo, is a common feature of Chinese renderings of proper names, 2001:213 n21). MĀ 203 takes place in Pāvārika’s Mango Grove near the town of Nāḷandā, whereas M 54 locates it at the town Āpaṇa in Aṅguttarapa country. For remarks on MĀ 203, see THICH. Minh Chau 1964:71. Analayo has done a helpful study of the Sutta (2011:314-317).

² The fragments are SHT V.1332a (p 226), SHT VI.1493 (p161), and SHT X.3917 (p 217), which correspond to the concluding part in M 54/1:368,1. The fragments continue with the opening of M 26, indicating that they had the same sequence as the Madhyama Āgama, where the parallel to M 26 (MĀ 204) also follows the parallel to M 54 (MĀ 203).

³ M 54/1:359,18: *gaha,pati* and MĀ 203/T1.773a14: 居士, *jūshì*.

⁴ MĀ 203/1.773a8. The account recurs at the end of MĀ 203/1.775b13, when Potaliya describes how he earlier over-estimates himself and rejoices in the Buddha’s exposition.

⁵ According to M 54/1:360,4, he refers to his condition as “having given up all work and cut off all businesses,” *sabbe kammanta paṭikkhittā sabbe vohārā samucchinnāti*, while according to MĀ 203/1.773a15 he speaks of the same in terms of having “renounced worldliness, abandoned worldliness, cast off worldly affairs,” 離俗, 斷俗, 捨諸俗事 *lí sú, duàn sú, shě zhū súshì*. Bapat notes the appropriateness of the rendering 俗事 for whatever equivalent the original text would have had for Pali *vohāra* (corresponding to Sanskrit *vyavahāra*), just as another occurrence of *vohāra* (in this case corresponding to Sanskrit *vyāhāra*) in M 112/3:29,29 has as its counterpart in MĀ 187/T1.-732b28: 說 *shuō*, indicating that the translator was clearly aware of these different meanings (1975:28).

⁶ MĀ 203/T1.773a29.

in listing the following amongst the defining qualities, that is, abstaining from killing, from stealing, from lying, from greed, from anger, and from excessive pride.

However, while the Pali version lists malicious speech and abusive speech [scolding] as the remaining two factors, the Chinese version has “sexual misconduct” as one factor and “dislike and irritation” as the other factor.⁷ The 8 qualities that we should abstain from as embodying our practice of “renouncing the world,” are given as follows in the Pali and the Chinese texts:

M 54: Fetters	overcome by	MĀ 203:	Chinese terms
(1) killing	non-killing	(same)	離殺 <i>lí shā</i>
(2) stealing	non-stealing	(same)	離不與取 <i>lí bù yǔ qǔ</i>
(3) lying	truth-telling	<i>no sexual misconduct</i>	離邪淫 <i>lí xié yín</i>
(4) <i>slander</i>	non-slandering	no lying	離妄言 <i>lí wàng yán</i>
(5) lustful desire	no lustful desire	(same)	無貪著 <i>wú tān zhāo</i>
(6) angry blaming	no angry blaming	no anger	無害恚 <i>wú hài huì</i>
(7) angry despair	no angry despair	<i>no dislike or irritation</i>	無憎嫉惱 <i>wú zēng jí nǎo</i>
(8) excessive pride	non-arrogance	no excessive pride	無增上慢 <i>wú zēng shàng màn</i>

Fig 1: The 8 fetters to be renounced (Pali & Chinese versions): differences are *italicized*.

The Commentary explains how the 8 fetters are overcome. Killing and stealing are to be abandoned by bodily virtue. Lying and slandering are overcome by verbal virtue. Lustful desire, angry despair and excessive pride are overcome by mental virtue. Angry blaming (which may include violence) is overcome by bodily and verbal virtues. (MA 3:40 f)

1.2.2 Signs of an early teaching

1.2.2.1 THE 8 FETTERS. Apparently, **the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta** (M 54) belongs to an early time in the Buddha’s ministry before the technical terms of “mental fetters” (*saṃyojana*) and “mental hindrances” were differentiated or defined. We have here an early list of the “the 8 fetters” (that bind us to samsara), that is, (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) lying, (4) slander, (5) lustful desire (*giddhi,lobha* as they), (6) angry blaming or fault-finding (*nindā,rosa*), (7) angry despair (*kodhūpāyāsa*), and (8) arrogance (*atimāna*) [§§6-13].

The Commentary says that although killing is not included amongst the 10 fetters or the 5 hindrances, it is called a “**fetter**” (*saṃyojana*) in the sense of binding us to samsara, the rounds of rebirth and redeath, and a “hindrance” in the sense of obstructing our spiritual welfare (MA 3:40). Technically, the fetters hinder spiritual progress by keeping us tied to samsara and suffering. The “**hindrances**” (*nīvaraṇa*) prevent us from calming and clearing our minds to attain samadhi or dhyana.⁸ The vital point here again is that this shows that it is an early Sutta where the *saṃyojana* and *nīvaraṇa* have probably not been differentiated with their technical functions.

1.2.2.2 SEXUAL MISCONDUCT. At first glance, the absence of sexual misconduct from the Pali version may seem surprising, as this quality is part of the 5 precepts (*pañca,sīla*) and the 10 karmic courses (*kamma,patha*), which includes killing, stealing and lying. This is understandable for two important reasons:

- (1) In the brief teaching [§4], “lustful desire” (*agiddhi,lobha*) is a generic term that includes sexual lust (*kāma, kāma,tanḥā*).
- (2) In the detailed teaching [§§6-13], the pattern is close to what would in due course evolve into the 10 courses of unwholesome conduct (*akusala kamma,patha*).

⁷ M 54/1:360,24+25: *pisuṇa vācā* and *nindā,rosa*, MĀ 203/T1.773b4+5: 邪淫 *xié yín* and 憎嫉惱 *zēng jí nǎo* (Hirakawa 1997: 367 indicates that 嫉 *jí*, besides its main meaning of “jealousy,” can also render *pratighāta*, which would fit the present context better).

⁸ On the 10 fetters, see **Kīṭṭa, giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1) & **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3(2); on the 5 hindrances, see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

1.2.3 Significance of the practice

1.2.3.1 RATIONALE. Each of the 8 conditions of practice [§§7.3, 8.3, 9.3, 10.3, 11.3, 12.3, 13.3] follow this threefold rationale:

- (1) the philosophical (right thinking), “I would surely blame myself”;
- (2) the ethical, “the wise would blame me, too”; and
- (3) the spiritual (or soteriological), “a suffering state would be expected (for me).”

This also applies to all the 7 conditions in the passages that follow, reflecting the universality of the truth that the Buddha is teaching—that is, the truth of the Dharma to ourself, to others and for all time.

However, this is not the full teaching: there is still “*not at all* the cutting off of all business in the all in every way” [§14.2]. In other words, this is only a preliminary or foundation practice. In the second teaching section—the mastering of the “all” (which refers to the 6 senses, and their respective objects and consciousnesses)⁹—Potaliya is taught how to cultivate “the equanimity that is unified, based on oneness” [§15.4 etc], which is an allusion to samadhi, especially dhyana [§§14.3-21.4].

The Buddha teachings then climaxes with the wisdom training, that is, the noble disciple’s 3 knowledges (the recollection of past lives, the knowledge of how beings fare according to their karma, and arhathood) [§§22-24]. In other words, this is the complete **3 trainings** [2].

1.2.3.2 EARLY DISCOURSE. It is important to note the simplicity and the teaching style of the Pali list, which lacks a more organized or technical listing, characteristic of the second period of the Buddha’s ministry. Clearly, on account of the non-technical terms used here, this is a very early discourse belonging to the first period.¹⁰

2 The purpose of the practice

2.1 THE 3 TRAININGS

2.1.1 The two versions agree that the rationale for refraining from these unwholesome activities and qualities—that is, the practice of the 8 abstentions [1.2]—is to avoid blame from the wise, a bad reputation, and the prospect of a bad rebirth.¹¹ Both versions also agree that even when all this wholesome conduct is accomplished, still more needs to be done [§14]. This is understandable when we see this as training in moral conduct (*sīla, sikkhā*), the first training in the schema of **the 3 trainings** (*sikkha-t, taya*), that is, the trainings in moral virtue (body and speech), in mental concentration (the mind) and in wisdom (understanding true reality).¹²

2.1.2 Although initially Potaliya appears misguided, even arrogant, about his status, he also seems to be amenable to the Dharma. From his confession and lion-roar, with the mention of “the wanderers of other sects” [§25], we can surmise that he has been earlier negatively influenced by them. Realizing this to be so, he confesses his misperceptions and corrects himself [§§25.7-8].

In fact, he invites the Buddha to teach him the Dharma, to clarify the true meaning of renunciation [§3.8]. The Buddha then characteristically announces, “In that case, houselord, listen, pay careful attention. I will speak” [§3.10].

When the Buddha gives him only a teaching in brief, he humbly requests that the Buddha explain it in detail [§5]. For a second time, the Buddha announces, “In that case, houselord, listen, pay careful attention. I will speak” [§5.2].

The Buddha that explains the training in moral virtue, at the end of which declares that there is still something more to learn. Potaliya requests the Buddha to continue to teach what comes next [§14]. For

⁹ See **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.2.

¹⁰ On the 2 periods of the Buddha’s ministry, see **Notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (1.3).

¹¹ While according to MĀ 203/T1.773b7, the Buddha describes these implications on his own accord, according to M 54/1:360,20 at first, he only enumerates the 8 qualities. Once Potaliya requests for an exposition, the Buddha explains the rationale for refraining from these 8 unwholesome activities and qualities.

¹² On the 3 trainings, see **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6; also SD 1.11 (5).

the second time, the Buddha announces for a third time, “In that case, houselord, listen, pay careful attention. I will speak” [§14.3].

This call to attention to a Dharma teaching is, as a rule, announced only once, wherever the line appears in the other suttas. Here, however, the Buddha announces it thrice, and apparently only here in **the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta**. As such, this is a unique feature to the Sutta.

2.2 THE “ALL”

2.2.1 After listing the 8 abstentions [1.2], which deal with moral training, the Buddha famously declares that there is still something more to be done.¹³ However, the Buddha’s enigmatic statement — “But in the noble one’s discipline, **this is not at all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way**” (*na tv-eva tāva ariyassa vinaye sabbena sabbaṃ sabbathā sabbaṃ vohāra, samucchedo hotīti*)¹⁴ [§§14×3, 25×3]—seems to be lost on the scholars and translators. I don’t think any previous translations have brought out the full sense and import of this most important line (which is, in fact, the essence of the whole Sutta).

2.2.2 The word *sabba* (“all”) occurs 4 times in this phrase: as determiner (“all business”), pronoun (“in every way,” in *all* ways), adverb (“at all,” ie *at all* cut off) and noun (“the all”). To fully appreciate this statement, we need to understand **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), where the Buddha declares that “the all” (*sabba*) are our 6 internal sense-faculties and their 6 external sense-objects.¹⁵ This is our life and world—“all” there is that is real for us, which we need to understand so that we can awaken from ignorance.

2.2.3 This is the Sutta’s key statement because, as a whole, the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta teaches us how to know our “all” (our world), to shape it (that is, not to be caught up in it), and to free ourselves from such a world. Or, another way of putting it: we should rise above our views of the world, see the whole picture, as it were, so that we are free of the fractured flickers of views, bits and pieces of wants that litter and crowd our evolving lives.

2.3 CONCENTRATION TRAINING

2.3.1 A well-dressed “renunciant”

2.3.1.1 The best way to get a bigger and clearer picture of our world, the “all” [2.2], is, of course, by way of meditation or mental concentration—this is what training in stillness or mental training (*samādhi*, *sikkhā*) is about, which the Sutta now turns to. Instead of the usual teaching on the dhyanas or the divine abodes, the Buddha approaches the teaching in a manner that Potaliya (and many of us) would appreciate, that is, by way of 7 parables dealing with the giving up of sensual pleasures [3]. Why does the Buddha use this approach?

2.3.1.2 Again, this is clearly understandable from the Sutta’s opening, where Potaliya presents himself as a self-proclaimed “renunciant,” but who looks every bit a dandy, “fully dressed and clothed, fully attired with umbrella and sandals” (*sampanna, nivāsana, pāvuraṇa chatt’upāhanāhi*) [§3.1]. The terms *nivāsa* and *pāvuraṇa* are words describing the traditional Indian way of dressing that we still see today. The term *nivāsa* (“dress”) refers mainly to the undergarment, the “dhoti” (Hindi, or more formally “pancha”) or sarong (Malay), while *pāvusaṇa* (“clothe”) is the outer garment or “kurta” (Hindi) or baju (Malay).¹⁶ Mahatma Gandhi is often shown in photos to be dressed in both.

2.3.1.3 Potaliya is not only well and fully dressed in lay clothes, but also dons sandals and carries an umbrella: all signs of a well-to-do houselord. In our own times, this would be something like a guru or priest who goes about with some designed or eye-catching habits or ornate robes (and perhaps religious

¹³ See eg (Ānanda) Subha S (D 10,1.31+passim), SD 40a.13.

¹⁴ This important phrase occurs 15 times, as meaning “of any kind whatsoever of anyone anywhere,” in **Mahā Ni-dāna S** (D 15/2:57,6+21+31, 58,11+22, 59,11+25, 60,1+12+22+33, 61,8+17+26, 62,4), SD 5.17.

¹⁵ S 35.23/4:15 @ SD 7.1.

¹⁶ Comy explains that difference btw the two cloths (worn by most Indian men) and says that the *pāvusaṇa* (or kurta) has a long fringe. (MA 3:38)

regalia, too) to proclaim some kind of “higher status” to others. Psychologically, this could well be symptomatic of a “guru complex” or a “Potaliya syndrome.” Or, on a more pragmatic level, this is all part of a marketing strategy or fund-raising ploy. The point, then, as the Buddha tells Potaliya, is that we are still “houselords” or lay persons, still caught up with sensual pleasures, desires and views. [§3]

2.3.2 Overcoming sensuality

2.3.2.1 (If you like, you can read the section on the 7 parables [3] first, and then come back here.)

The Sutta’s 7 parables [§§15-21] are illustrations of the disadvantages (that is, the unreality or danger) of sensuality [3]. How do these parables or the teaching of the dangers of sensuality fit it here?

Again here, this makes good sense if we see the Sutta as being structured on the 3 trainings [2.1]. We have already mentioned the first training—that of moral virtue, which is the restraint in body and speech [1.2]. This is a preparation for mental training, the second training, which consists of two kinds of practices, that is, mindfulness training and meditation itself.

2.3.2.2 An important instruction on mindfulness training is given in **the Indriya Bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), known as “the practitioner’s cultivation of the faculties.” Here’s a useful summary:

- (1) We are to note whether the sense-experience (that is, a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, a sight, or a thought) is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, just as it is (that is, without relating it to other emotions or memories).
- (2) We should then regard that sense-experience as being “conditioned, gross, dependently arisen” (*saṅkhata oḷārikā paṭicca,samuppannā*), which is to do with the past, present and future. This feeling arising from this sense-experience is conditioned (*saṅkhata*) by some *past* memory or perception. It is a gross (*oḷārika*) experience, that is, sense-based, arising from one of the *present* physical senses or from our mind (or thoughts). And it has arisen depending on such conditions—no more, no less—seeing it in this way, we calm our minds down and remove those conditions so that we are mentally equanimous: there is no *future* or further suffering (at least for the moment).
- (3) Reflect on the experience as being impermanent. See the Indriya Bhāvanā Sutta (M 152) for the 6 insightful parables, one for each of the senses: sight (like a blink of the eye), sound (like a finger-snap), smell (like raindrops on a sloping lotus-leaf), taste (like gob of spittle that is spat out), touch (like stretching and bending our arm), and thought (like a couple of water-drops that vaporize on a hot iron plate).¹⁷

This is a set of methods for mindfulness practice, which means that we should habitually do this (that is, any of them) so that we do not react negatively to any sense-stimuli, but see them for what they really are. This habitual mindfulness prevents negative thoughts and emotions from arising, or they are quickly suppressed when they do arise, and to cultivate a wholesome mind, especially with the cultivation of lovingkindness.¹⁸

2.3.2.3 In **the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta**, the parables on the disadvantages of sensuality are simple exercises or reflections to help us clear our minds of sensual thoughts. This is a special teaching for Potaliya, as from his demeanour, he is clearly a man of great sensual craving [2.3.1], as most of us are. As such, this is also a training for us. This is the third training—that of meditation—that builds upon the previous two trainings.

Having put our body and speech at ease, we now clear our minds of *all* negative thought. The “all” (*sabba*) here refers to our senses and the sense-objects [2.2]. We simply leave them where they are, so to speak, at their source, and do not allow them into our minds. If our body and speech are stilled, then it is easy to still our minds, too, for example, by watching the breath in breath meditation.¹⁹

Understandably, Potaliya, as a man of sensual inclination, he is not ready for dhyana meditation, and so the Buddha gives no instruction—no direct instructions, anyway—on this here. Even if we are unable

¹⁷ **Indriya Bhāvanā S** (M 152,4-9/3:298-300), SD 17.13.

¹⁸ On the cultivation of lovingkindness (*mettā,bhāvanā*), see **Karaṇīya Metta S** & SD 38.3 (6).

¹⁹ On breath meditation (*ānāpāna,sati*), see **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,5-7+15-22), SD 7.13 & **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62,24-30), SD 3.11.

to attain dhyana, we can still live mindfully to attain streamwinning or once-return. This is, in fact, the best practice²⁰ for busy lay people or those who have much sensual desires. We are what the Buddha calls lay practitioners or “white-dressed householders who enjoy sense-experiences” (*gihī odāta, vasano kāma, -bhogī*).²¹

2.4 WISDOM TRAINING

2.4.1 Parable refrain on equanimity

2.4.1.1 Although the Buddha gives no direct instructions on dhyanas to Potaliya, there is a clear allusion to them in all the 7 parables. Each parable closes with this refrain:

Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,²² and cultivates the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains. [§§15.4, 16.3, 17.3, 18.4, 19.3, 20.4, 21.5]

2.4.1.2 The refrain refers to 2 kinds of equanimity [3.2], “the equanimity that is diversified” (*upekkhā nānattā*) and “the equanimity that is unified” (*upekkhā ekattā*). The former kind of equanimity is said to be “based on diversity” (*nānatta, sita*), meaning that it is the working of the sense-experiences, which is worldly. The latter, on the other hand, is “based on oneness” (*ekatta, sita*), that is, on mental concentration, or more technically, dhyana (which is not mentioned in the Sutta).

2.4.1.3 In the **Kiṭṭā, giri Sutta** (M 70), the worldly diversified equanimity is a “house-bound equanimity” (*geha, sitā upekkhā*) based on experiencing as much sense-experiences as possible, while the spiritually unified equanimity is a “renunciation-based equanimity” (*nekkhamma, sitā upekkhā*).²³ The Commentary to the Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 137), alluding to the two kinds of joy, explains that the expression, “of the household life” (*geha, sita*), means “connected with the cords of sense-pleasure,” while “of renunciation” (*nekkhamma, sita*) means “connected with insight.” This joy arises when we have set up insight and are watching the break-up of formations with the flow of sharp and bright insight-knowledge focused on formations. (MA 5:22)

2.4.1.4 The same Commentary adds that the householder’s equanimity (*gehasitā upekkhā*)²⁴ is the equanimity of unknowing [ignorance] that arises in one who has not broken the barriers created by defilements or the future karmic fruits. It “does not go beyond form” (*rūpaṃ sā ativattati*) because it is stuck, glued to the object like flies to a ball of sugar. And the renunciant’s equanimity (*nekkhamma, sitā upekkhā*)²⁵ is the equanimity of insight knowledge. It does not lust after desirable objects that fall within the range of the senses, nor does it feel ill will toward undesirable objects. (MA 5:24)

2.4.1.5 It is important to note that “renunciant” here does not refer only to a monastic. It certainly does not refer to monastics who do not meditate or who are engaged with the world. Just as the word “monk” (*bhikkhu*) in meditation suttas refers to the “meditator,”²⁶ “**renunciant**” here refers to the meditator, too. In other words, renunciation (*nekkhamma*) refers to “the intention of desirelessness or letting go.”²⁷

²⁰ For a key practice, see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.10), SD 16.7.

²¹ **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73,10/1:491), SD 27.4. See also **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6 esp (15.2.6): How to be a lay arhat.

²² *Evam etaṃ yathā, bhūtaṃ samma-p, paññāya disvā yāyaṃ upekkhā nānattā nānatta, sitā taṃ abhinivajjevā.*

²³ See **Kiṭṭā, giri S** (M 70,7/1:475), SD 11.1 & **Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137.9-15/3:217-219), SD 29.5.

²⁴ Lit, “the equanimity of the householder.”

²⁵ Lit, “the equanimity of the renunciant.”

²⁶ Here, “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating a proper meditation (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251). See SD 13.1 (3.1.1).

²⁷ The opp of “thought of renunciation” (*nekkhamma, saṅkappa*) is “thought of sensuality or lustful thoughts” (*kāma, saṅkappa*): see Gethin 2001; 190, 191 f.

2.4.1.6 Meditation, properly done, is an experience of **renunciation**. In effective meditation, we begin by sitting comfortably in a conducive place so that we can let go of the body and speech, meaning that we simply turn our attention gently away from all sense-experiences (except “bare mindfulness”).

When properly done, the body becomes calm and relaxed, with our attention fully directed to the meditation object, focusing only on the most basic processes of the breath or the impermanence (“rise and fall”) of the mind. When we are able to renounce all thoughts (even for a brief moment), we experience a mental stillness, because we are free from all thoughts. We would feel a “oneness-based equanimity,” which is profoundly blissful, especially when this is dhyana.²⁸

2.4.2 Insight wisdom. That dhyana alluded to in the Buddha’s instructions to Potaliya is clear from the section on wisdom training [§§22-24], which is on the noble disciple’s **3 knowledges** (*te, vijjā*), that is,

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| (1) the knowledge of past lives— | the affirmation of <u>rebirth</u> ; |
| (2) the knowledge of how beings fare according to their <u>karma</u> — | the affirmation of <u>karma</u> ; and |
| (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes— | the affirmation of <u>arhathood</u> . |

The last knowledge is only briefly stated, as in ancient reports of the actual attaining of arhathood²⁹ or the training of a monk [§§22-25.2].³⁰ Apparently, this third knowledge includes the four-truth formula only in later suttas.³¹ The arhathood-attainment formula here is very short, and is likely to be a sign that this is an ancient text.

3 The Sutta parables

3.1 COMPARATIVE COMMENTS

3.1.1 The 7 parables. The (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta contains a set of 7 parables, all of which are also found in the set of 10 in **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22),³² but where they are only simply listed without any explanation, with the presumption that they already appeared elsewhere (such as here in our Sutta). This again attests to the age of this Sutta.

3.1.2 The 10 parables mentioned in **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22) are as follows:

- (1) The bare bone (or skeleton), a fleshless, blood-smearred bone cannot satisfy the hunger of a starving dog.³³ (cf S 2:185 = It 17).
- (2) The piece of meat, for which birds of prey fight, unyielding, often meeting death or deadly pain due to their beaks and claws.³⁴
- (3) The grass torch, carried against the wind severely burns the carrier.³⁵

²⁸ See **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12. On meditation as *renunciation*, see **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2) & **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7).

²⁹ See eg **Jhānābhiñña S** (S 16.9), SD 98.7 (the Buddha’s own awakening and that of Mahā Kassapa); (**Arahat-ta**) **Nanda S** (U 22,21+23+27), SD 43.7 (Nanda’s awakening).

³⁰ See eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,99.2), SD 8.10; **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 25,42), SD 1.11.

³¹ Apparently, the presence of this 4-truth formula also betrays a late text: see eg Norman 1990:26.

³² **The 10 similes** are found in M 22,3.5/1:130 = V 2:25 = A 3:97 = J 5:210 = Thī 487-91; MA 2:103.

³³ For a parallel to the parable of the dog gnawing on a bare bone in Jain scripture, see von Kamptz 1929:24.

³⁴ Cf M 23/1:145,3, where the piece of meat represents lust and delight; “shared by many,” VA 870 = MA 2:103; J 330/3:100,15; Vism 341; Miln 280. The flying bird biting a piece of meat that is attacked by other birds recurs in J 408 (J 3:378,16), a king, seeing the predicament of this bird, becomes thoroughly revulsed with sensual pleasures, as a result of which he achieves awakening as a pratyeka-buddha. This story tale is part of a set of 4 on pratyeka-buddhas common to both the Buddhist and Jain traditions, on these tales see eg, Charpentier 1908, Pavolini 1899, and Wiltshire 1990:118-166). A variation on this particular image occurs at V 3:105,37 and **Pesi S** (S 19.2/2:256,7 || SĀ 509/T2.135c1), where a preta in the form of a piece of meat flies through the air and is pecked at by birds, as the karmic retribution upon an ex-butcher. The parable also occurs in Mahābharata, where an eagle with a piece of meat is attacked by other eagles (Franke 1906:345).

³⁵ The parable of the blazing grass torch recurs at Thī 507, where it illustrates sensual pleasures. It illustrates the dangers of ill will at S 14.12/2:152.

- (4) The fiery coal pit, over which a man is dragged by others, then thrown into the flames and consumed by it.³⁶
- (5) The dream of a beautiful landscape disappears when we awake (cf Shakespeare's *Sonnet* 129).
- (6) The borrowed goods, with which we foolishly pride ourselves but are taken back by the owners.
- (7) The fruit-laden tree (or fruits on a tree): a man up in a fruit-laden tree is threatened with danger or death, when another, desiring fruits and unable to climb, axes it down.
- (8) The butcher's knife and block (or executioner's block): sense-desires cut off our spiritual development (cf M 1:144).
- (9) The sword stake: sense-desires are piercing, causing wounds where there are none before (S 1:128 = Thī 58 = 141; Vism 341).
- (10) The snake's head: sense-desires are a grave risk to our welfare, present and future (cf Sn 768).
(M 22,3.5/1:130), SD 3.13

Of these 10, only the first 7 parables are found in **the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta** [§§15-21], and explained in some detail.³⁷

3.1.3 The parables in the Chinese version. While the Pali version (M 54) has 7 parables, the Chinese version (MĀ 203) has 8 parables. Both versions compare sensuality in similar terms to a dog gnawing a bare bone, a bird with a piece of meat being attacked by other birds in the air, and a blazing grass torch that is held against the wind. While the Pali parable describes a man seized by two strong men and dragged to a burning charcoal pit,³⁸ its Madhyama Āgama parallel, however, gives a similar parable but without any other men. It simply says that the man would not want to fall into such a burning pit, since he wants to live and to avoid suffering.³⁹

M 54

- (1) hungry dog gnawing a bare bone (1) [§15]
- (2) bird with meat is attacked (2) [§16]
- (3) burning grass-torch against wind (3) [§17]
- (4) seized by 2 men over a blazing charcoal-pit (4) [§18]
- (5) a dream of lovely parks and groves (5) [§19]
- (6) borrowed goods (6) [§20]
- (7) man in a fruit-laden tree (7) [§21]

MĀ 203

- (1) (same)
- (2) (same)
- (3) (same)
- (4) fears falling into burning pit
- (5) *being bitten by a poisonous snake*
- (6) a dream of 5 kinds of sense-pleasures
- (7) borrowed goods
- (8) man in a fruit-laden tree

Fig 3.1.3. Parables on sensual pleasures: a comparison

The Chinese Madhyama Āgama version continues after the parable of the burning charcoal pit with the parable of a poisonous snake, which describes a man who would not wish any of his limbs to be bitten

³⁶ Also at S 35.244/4:188,26; J 1:231, 2:313, 4:118; Vism 124. A parable of the blazing charcoal pit without the two strong men dragging a third towards the pit appears in M 12,37.3/1:74,15 @ SD 49.1; see also D 34/3:283,22, A 8.28/4:224,15, A 10.90/5:175,6, and Sn 2.14/396. Elsewhere, the parable evokes an idea of being at the mercy of two strong men, reflecting the pain we feel when seriously ill or when doing forced breath control: M 36/1:244,28, M 85/2:93,23, M 97/2:193,17, M 100/2:212,6, M 143/3:259,10, M 144/3:264,8, S 35.87/4:56,29, and A 6.56/3:-380,14. At S 12.63/2:99,29, the parable illustrates volition, apparently intended to depict the inevitability of its karmic fruits.

³⁷ The parables are briefly mentioned in Nyanaponika 1974:26 n2. The M 54 parables are discussed in Hecker 2009:132-136; see also Analayo 2011:148 n 17.

³⁸ M 54/1:365,16.

³⁹ MĀ 203/T1.774b18. The image of two men dragging a third towards a burning pit as an illustration of sensual pleasures is also found in M 75/1:507,7 and its parallel MĀ 153/T1.672a6, where it reflects on how a leper cauterizes his wounds over a burning pit. Here the point is to indicate that, once this leper has healed, would not want to come near the pit and has to be dragged there by force. Another instance where the same parable is used to illustrate sensual pleasures is S 35.203/4:188,25. Its Chinese parallel, SĀ 1173/T2.314a17, only describes how we would avoid falling into such a burning pit, without mentioning any intervention by others.

by such a snake.⁴⁰ This parable does not occur in the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta. As to this difference it is noteworthy that the Alagaddûpama Sutta and its Madhyama Āgama parallel report that a group of monks quote a series of parables taught by the Buddha on the disadvantages of sensual pleasures. This series not only contains the parables found in the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta, but also the parable of the poisonous snake. This could explain why the Madhyama Āgama includes it in its version of the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta.⁴¹

In the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta's dream parable, the man sees lovely parks and groves. Its parallel in the Madhyama Āgama, however, depicts the man as dreaming of the 5 kinds of sensual pleasure, but when he wakes up, he sees none of them.⁴²

The final two parables in both versions similarly describe how someone may show off with borrowed goods, and how a man up in a fruit-laden tree eating some of the fruits is in grave danger as another man comes to cut down the tree to get its fruits.⁴³

3.2 EQUANIMITY

3.2.1 The two versions agree in concluding each parable with a description of how a noble disciple realizes the disadvantages of sensual pleasures and transcends them. The Majjhima Nikāya version stands alone in describing that the noble disciple avoids diversified equanimity and instead develops unified equanimity.⁴⁴ [2.4.1]

According to the commentarial explanation, such unified equanimity refers to the equanimity of the fourth dhyana,⁴⁵ although in the Pali version, no dhyana is mentioned. However, the attainment of the fourth dhyana could fit the present context, since the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta continues at this point with the 3 higher knowledges, whose attainment is based on the 4 dhyanas.

3.2.2 The same can also be seen in the Madhyama Āgama version, which after the last parable explicitly mentions the cultivation of the 4 dhyanas.⁴⁶ The Madhyama Āgama account continues after the 4

⁴⁰ MĀ 203/T1.774b29, see tr in Ehara 1961:74 n 1.

⁴¹ M 22/1:130,29 speaks of the “parable of a snake’s head,” *sapp,sir’upama*, while its parallel MĀ 200/T1.763c20 speaks of a “poisonous snake,” 毒蛇 *dú shé*, using the same term as MĀ 203/T1.774b29. The parable of a snake’s head recurs in Sn 4.1/768, again as an illustration of the dangers of sensuality: see also Analayo 2011:148 n17. In the context of a similar set of parables, SĀ2 185/T2.440a6 refers to something that is poisonous and stings, which could be a reference to the snake imagery, although the passage is ambiguous: “sensual desires are like faeces and poison, they sting and pollute,” 欲如糞毒，亦螫亦污 *yù rú fèn dú, yì shì yì wū*.

⁴² MĀ 203/T1.774c13-14: 夢得具足五欲自娛，彼若悟已，都不見一 *mèng dé jù jù wǔ yù zì yú, bǐ ruò wù yǐ, dōu bù jiàn yī* [Note: 具足 is here pronounced as *jù jù*, “excessive”; otherwise usu as *jù zú*, “complete.”] The parable of awaking from a dream recurs in Sn 4.6/807, where it illustrates the separation from dear ones who have passed away and not seen any more, just like images in a dream.

⁴³ A fruit-laden tree parable is found in the Jain *Isibhāsiyāim* 24.32, Schubring 1969:526: *chijjam va tarum āruḍhā phal’atthi va jahā narā*.

⁴⁴ M 54/1:364,25: *yā’yam upekhā nānatta nānatta,sita tam abhinivajjetvā yā’yam upekhā ekattā ekatta,sitā ... bhāveti* (M:Be 2:27,21, M:Ce 2:46,10, M:Se 2:41,15: *upekkhā*).

⁴⁵ MA 3:43,13. This comy gloss finds support in M 137/3:220,27, where the same expression *upe(k)khā ekattā ekatta,sitā* refers to the equanimity experienced during the 4 formless attainments (which are actually progressively refined states based on the fourth dhyana).

⁴⁶ MĀ 203/T1.775a21 refers to the 1st dhyana only by way of its first two factors, 有覺，有觀 *yǒu jué, yǒu guān*, corresponding to *vitakka* and *vicāra*, after which it has a full description of the other 3 dhyanas. The reference to the dhyana-factors of the first dhyana in this instance could, notes Analayo, “in principle also be a corrupted version of the beginning formula for the second jhana, which begins with the overcoming of these two, in which case this passage would proceed directly from the overcoming of sensual desires to the second jhana. As the overcoming of sensual desires precedes the first jhana, however, which is already aloof from such desires, it seems more probable that the present passage’s mentioning of 有覺有觀 *yǒu jué yǒu guān* is rather a remnant of a reference to the first jhana” (2011:317 n38).

dhyanas directly with the destruction of the influxes,⁴⁷ without mentioning the first two higher knowledges found in the Pali version.⁴⁸

However, if we look at the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta context, it is clear that Potaliya is not ready for deep meditation, even dhyana meditation (*jhāna*),⁴⁹ much less the formless attainments (*arūpa samāpat-ti*).⁵⁰ It is possible that here the Chinese translators or text compilers tried to make the translation *technically* more comprehensive than their source-texts or urtexts were.⁵¹

4 Potaliya's spiritual progress

4.1 POTALIYA'S LION-ROAR

4.1.1 At the end of the Sutta [§25], when the Buddha asks Potaliya if he has practised “all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way of the noble one,” Potaliya is simply impressed and confesses by way of a lion-roar, admits that his “cutting off of business” [§3] is simply out of his league.

Potaliya then admits that in the past, he has underestimated the Buddha's monastics, but now knows them as “thoroughbreds” (*ājānīya*). Now he would also offer them proper offerings worthy of their spirituality, and treat them with due respect [§25]. Finally, he goes for refuge [§26].

4.1.2 The Chinese version agrees with the Pali in recording Potaliya's admission that his claim to having left all worldliness behind is an overestimation, followed by his refuge-going. The Madhyama Āgama version, however, concludes by saying that at the end of the Buddha's discourse, Potaliya becomes a streamwinner.⁵²

This spiritual change could well be the case if Potaliya joins the order or continues to practise as a lay-follower. However, there is evidence that he goes on to become a wanderer, which probably means that he has taken up the Buddha's advice here. It is unlikely that Potaliya would have been a wanderer prior to meeting the Buddha, especially from the description about him (such as his worldly mode of dressing himself) at the start of the Sutta.

4.2 POTALIYA THE WANDERER

4.2.1 In fact, there is no mention in the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta of Potaliya attaining any spiritual state as a result of the teaching. However, we do have **the (Catukka) Potaliya Sutta** (A 4.100), where he appears as a wanderer (*paribbājaka*), and the Buddha instructs him on the 4 kinds of persons in terms of being praiseworthy and being blameworthy, highlighting the one who is skilled in praising or criticizing others in a wholesome way where such an action is proper.⁵³

4.2.2 It is likely that after being instructed by the Buddha, as recorded in **the (Gaha,pati) Potaliya Sutta** (M 54), Potaliya does not join the order, but decides to humbly dress up as a wanderer and live as such. It is possible that, like Māluṅkyā,putta who becomes an arhat only much later in old age,⁵⁴ Potaliya is probably intellectually inclined, like Māluṅkyā,putta, or at least has religious inclinations, but is not ready for full commitment to the holy life until much later in his life. From the details of the teachings

⁴⁷ MĀ 203/T1.775a27.

⁴⁸ M 54/1:367,10.

⁴⁹ On *jhāna*, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

⁵⁰ See **Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.1), SD 24.11 (5).

⁵¹ We see a similar zeal by the Pali Sutta compilers in the south Asian MSS of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,18-21/2:305-313) which goes on to give a detailed analysis of the 4 noble truths (§§18-21) that is more elaborate than its parallel in **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141/3:248-252). Both **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,44/1:62) and parallel sections of **Ānāpānasati S** (M 118) omit these long extraneous materials. On the lateness of this whole section, see Intro: SD 13.1 (1.1+3). For purposes of meditation, it is best to follow **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10), SD 13.3, while **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22), SD 13.2 may be studied alongside **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1, for a better understanding of the latter.

⁵² MĀ 203/T1.775b4.

⁵³ A 4.100/2:100 f @ SD 77.10.

⁵⁴ See **(Arahatta) Māluṅkyā,putta S** (S 35.95), SD 5.9.

that the Buddha gives to Potaliya, it can be surmised that he would sooner or later attain to some level of the path.⁵⁵

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The Discourse to Potaliya (the Houselord)

M 54

1 Thus have I heard.

The Buddha at Āpaṇa

1.2 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Ang'uttarāpa.⁵⁶ There was a market town of the Ang'uttarāpas⁵⁷ called Āpaṇa.⁵⁸

2 Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One, taking robe and bowl, entered Āpaṇa for alms.

Having walked for almsfood in Āpaṇa, and having taken his meal after the almsround, he approached a certain forest grove for a day-rest.

Having plunged into the forest grove, he approached the foot of a certain tree and sat down for the day-rest.

Potaliya as a retired “renunciant”

3 Now at that time, too, the houselord Potaliya, fully dressed and clothed, fully attired with umbrella and sandals, was walking about on a stroll to stretch his legs.⁵⁹

Having approached and plunged into the forest grove, he approached the Blessed One, and exchanged greetings with him. When the cordial and friendly greetings were concluded, he stood at one side.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ For others who do not immediately benefit from the Buddha's teaching, see SD 1.4 (2.3). On the other hand, cf **Upaka**, who at first rejects the Buddha but later joins the order and attains non-return: see SD 12.1 (4-5).

⁵⁶ Comy says that the term *aṅg'uttarāpa* is a dvandva comprising Aṅga and Uttarāpa. **Aṅguttarāpa** is mentioned in the origin story of the allowance for the 5 products of a cow (*pañca, goras'ādi, anujānanā*, Mv 6.34.17 = V 1:243); **Potaliya S** (M 1:359), **Laṭukikōpama S** (M 1:447); **Sela S** (M 2:146 = Sn 3.7/p102). **Aṅga** is one of the 16 great states (*mahā jana, pada*) [SD 4.18 App] of ancient north central India, and located east of Magadha, separated by the river Campā, with their capital at Campā (near modern Bhagalpur). During the Buddha's time, Aṅga is part of Magadha, ruled by Bimbisāra, and are known as Aṅga, magadha (V 1:27×2, 28, 179; D 2:202, 203; M 2:2; J 2:211, 6:272; MA 2:196; SA 1:351; AA 3:313; DhA 3:242; SnA 2:384; CA 126). Just north of the river Mahī, not too far, there is Uttarāpa (*aṅgā eva so jana, pado, gaṅgāya* [mahā, mahī, gaṅgāya] *pana yā uttarena āpo, tāsam avidūrattā uttarāpāti vuccati*, MA 3:34,21 = SnA 2:437,7).

⁵⁷ This is an anglicized form of *aṅg'uttarāpa*: see prec n.

⁵⁸ Āpaṇa is so called because it has many shops and bazaars (MA 3:37).

⁵⁹ *Potaliyo pi kho gahapati sampanna, nivāsana, pāvuraṇo chatt'upāhanāhi jaṅghā, vihāraṃ anucaṅkamamāno anuvicaramāno, yena so vana, saṅdo ten'upasaṅkami*. Comy on **Meghiya S** (A 9.3 = U 31) explains *jaṅghā, vihāra* as the stretching of one's legs after a long sitting in meditation (UA 217), or of the Buddha himself, ie, walking about for the sake of easing up the legs' tightness (*jaṅghā, kilamatha, vinodan'attham jaṅghā, cāraṃ*, MA 2:151); or, going for a stroll, as in the case of Daṇḍa, pānī (MA 2:72) in **Madhu, piṇḍika S**, M 18,3 @ SD 6.14; or for sight-seeing, “For the sake of seeing parks, woods, mountains” (MA 2:73). This is stock: D 1:235; M 1:108, 2:118, 2:118; Sn p105. Cf Miln 22; J 2:240, 272. See **Te, vijja S** (D 13.3/1:234) = D:RD 1:301n. See MA 2:270 (Assaji, Sāriputta's teacher); PvA 73. For a detailed treatment on the phrase, see SnA 447 f. See (2.3.1). For stock refs and other details, see M 18,2 n (SD 6.14).

⁶⁰ This gesture of not assuming the same posture as the other, esp a teacher, shows that Potaliya does not as yet fully respect the Buddha. Perhaps, he thinks of only chatting with the Buddha for a short while before resuming his walk. However, in §3.8, he become fully receptive.

3.2 As Potaliya was standing at one side, the Blessed One said this to him,
“There are seats, **houcelord** (*gaha,pati*). If you wish, please sit down.”

3.3 When this was spoken, the houcelord Potaliya thought:

“The recluse Gotama addresses me with the word ‘houcelord!’” and, being angry and displeased, remained silent.⁶¹

3.4 For the second time, the Buddha said to the houcelord Potaliya,
“There are seats, *houcelord*. If you wish, please sit down.”

For the second time, when this was spoken, the houcelord Potaliya thought:

“The recluse Gotama addresses me with the word ‘houcelord!’” and, being angry and displeased, remained silent.

3.5 For the third time, the Buddha said to the houcelord Potaliya,
“There are seats, *houcelord*. If you wish, please sit down.”

For the third time, when this was spoken, the houcelord Potaliya thought:

“The recluse Gotama addresses me with the word ‘*houcelord*!’” and, being angry and displeased, he said this to the Blessed One,

3.6 “This, [360] master Gotama, is improper, it is unseemly, that you should address me with the word ‘*houcelord*!’”⁶²

The Buddha questions Potaliya

3.7 “But you, houcelord, have the features, the marks, the signs of a houcelord.”⁶³

“Even then, master Gotama, all work have been given up by me. All business⁶⁴ have been cut off by me.”⁶⁵

“But how, houcelord, have all work been given up by you, *all* business been cut off by you?”

3.8 “Here, master Gotama, that which is my wealth or grain or gold or silver, they all have been handed over to my children as their inheritance.⁶⁶ Neither advising nor criticizing them in these matters, I live with only food and clothing [covering].⁶⁷

This is how, master Gotama, all work have been given up by me, all business have been cut off by me.”

Potaliya requests the Buddha’s teaching

3.9 “But, houcelord, what you call the cutting off of business is different from what is called the cutting off of business in the noble one’s⁶⁸ discipline.”

3.10 “**How now, *bhante*,⁶⁹ is the cutting off of business in the noble one’s discipline like?**⁷⁰

⁶¹ *Gahapati, vādena maṃ samaṇo gotamo samudācaratīti kupīto anattamaṇo tuṅhī ahoṣi*. On this silence of anger, see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1 esp (2.11).

⁶² *Ta-y-idaṃ bho gotama na-c, channaṃ, tayidaṃ na-p, patirūpaṃ, yaṃ maṃ tvaṃ gahapati, vādena samudācara-sīti*.

⁶³ *Te hi te gahapati ākāra, te liṅgā, te nimittā yathā taṃ gahapatissāti*.

⁶⁴ “Business” (*vohāra*), ie trade; however, the Buddha uses this same word in a more general sense of “busyness” or worldly activities [eg §3.10] throughout.

⁶⁵ *Tathā hi pana me bho gotama sabbe kammantā paṭikkhittā, sabbe vohārā samucchinnāti*.

⁶⁶ *Idha me bho gotama yaṃ ahoṣi dhaṇaṃ vā dhaññaṃ vā rajataṃ vā jāta, rūpaṃ vā sabbam taṃ puttānaṃ dāyajaṃ niyyātam*

⁶⁷ *Tatthāhaṃ anovādī anupavādī ghāsa-c, chādana, paramo viharāmi*. “With only food and clothing,” *ghās ‘acchādana, paramatāya*; alt tr “with only food and covering” or “with the simplest of food and clothing.” The phrase *ghāsa-c, chādana, paramatāya* recurs in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,34.3/1:60), SD 8.10.

⁶⁸ The “noble one” (*ariya*) here refers to the arhat, as evident from the statement on the 3 knowledges [§§22-24].

⁶⁹ Note Potaliya’s change of vocative, previously addressing the Buddha in a brahminical way as “master Gotama” (*bho gotama*) to *bhante*, a more respectful moder of address.

It would be good, bhante, if the Blessed One were to show the Dharma that is the cutting off of business in the noble one's discipline."⁷¹

3.11 "In that case, houselord, listen well, I will speak."⁷²

"Yes, bhante," the houselord Potaliya replied to the Blessed One."

I. TRAINING IN MORAL CONDUCT

The 8 conditions

4 The Blessed One said this,

"There are, houselord, these **8 conditions** that conduce to the cutting off of business in the noble one's discipline.

What are the eight?

- | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) Dependent on | not taking life, | the taking of life | should be abandoned. ⁷³ |
| (2) Dependent on | taking only the given, | stealing | should be abandoned. ⁷⁴ |
| (3) Dependent on | truth-telling, | false speech | should be abandoned. ⁷⁵ |
| (4) Dependent on | not slandering, | slandering | should be abandoned. ⁷⁶ |
| (5) Dependent on | the lack of lustful desire, | lustful desire | should be abandoned. ⁷⁷ |
| (6) Dependent on | the lack of angry blaming, | angry blaming | should be abandoned. ⁷⁸ |
| (7) Dependent on | the lack of angry despair, | angry despair | should be abandoned. ⁷⁹ |
| (8) Dependent on | non-arrogance, | arrogance | should be abandoned. |

These, houselord, are the 8 conditions that conduce to the cutting off of business in the noble one's discipline."⁸⁰

The teaching in detail

5 "Bhante, as regards these teachings on the 8 conditions that conduce to the cutting off of business in the noble discipline that have been given by the Blessed One **in brief**, without elaboration, it would be good for me, bhante, if the Blessed One were, out of compassion, to explain them **in detail**."⁸¹

5.2 "In that case, houselord, listen, pay careful attention. I will speak."⁸²

"Yes, bhante," the houselord Potaliya replied to the Blessed One.

⁷⁰ This is Potaliya's first Dharma question in this Sutta, which the Buddha responds with a teaching on moral virtue. For the second Dharma question, see [§14.3], which the Buddha answers with teachings on mental cultivation (the 7 parables) [§§15-21] and wisdom (the 3 knowledges) [§§22-24].

⁷¹ *Sādhū me bhante bhagavā tathā dhammaṃ desetu yathā ariyassa vinaye vohāra, samucchedo hotīti*. Notice how he is now respectful and fully receptive here, as compared to §3.

⁷² This announcement recurs at §5.2 + §14.3. They occur thrice altogether, which is unique to this Sutta: see [2.1.2]. Note that Potaliya has been standing all this while, but, on account of his respectful desire to know the Dharma, he would probably be seated by this time to properly listen to the Dharma.

⁷³ *Apāṇātipātāṃ nissāya pāṇātipāto pahātabbo*.

⁷⁴ *Dinn'ādānaṃ nissāya adinnādānaṃ pahātabbāṃ*

⁷⁵ *Sacca, vācaṃ [vī Saccam vācam] nissāya musāvādo pahātabbo*.

⁷⁶ *Apisuṇaṃ vācaṃ nissāya pisuṇā vācā pahātabbā*.

⁷⁷ *Agiddhi, lobhaṃ nissāya, giddhi, lobho pahātabbo*. Comy glosses *giddhi, lobha* as "greed born of lust" (*gedha, bhūto lobho*, MA 3:39).

⁷⁸ *Anindā, rosaṃ nissāya, nindāroso pahātabbo*.

⁷⁹ *Akkodhūpāyāsaṃ nissāya, kodhūpāyāso pahātabbo*.

⁸⁰ Cf **Dhamma Dāyāda S** (M 3,2.2), SD 2.18, & **Anupada S** (M 111,22), SD 56.4, where the Buddha exhorts us to be his Dharma heirs, not heirs to material things.

⁸¹ *Ye me, bhante, bhagavatā aṭṭha dhammā saṃkhittena vuttā, vitthārena avibhattā, ariyassa vinaye vohāra, samucchedāya saṃvattanti, sādhū me, bhante, bhagavā ime aṭṭha dhamme vitthārena vibhajatu anukampaṃ upādāyāti*. For a similar request by Subha Todeyya,putta, in slightly different words, see **Cūḷa Kamma Vibhaṅga S** (M 135,-4.2), SD 4.15.

⁸² This announcement recurs at §3.8 + §14.3. They occur thrice altogether, which is unique to this Sutta [2.1.2].

The Blessed One said this: [361]

6 (1) NON-KILLING. “**Dependent on not taking life, the taking of life should be abandoned,**’ so it is said. In what connection is this said?

6.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of those fetters,⁸³ because of which I might kill living beings.⁸⁴

6.3 For, if I were to kill living beings, **I** would surely blame myself for doing so.

And on account of killing, **the wise**, upon investigating, would blame me, too.⁸⁵

On account of killing, with the body’s breaking up, after death,⁸⁶ **a suffering state** would be expected.⁸⁷

6.4 Indeed, this very **killing** is a fetter, a mental hindrance.⁸⁸

And dependent on *killing*, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from killing, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on not taking life, the taking of life should be abandoned.*’⁸⁹

7 (2) NON-STEALING. “**Dependent on taking only the given, stealing should be abandoned,**” so it is said. In what connection is this said?

7.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of *those fetters because of which I might steal [take the not-given]*.

7.3 For, if I were to steal, *I* would surely *blame myself* for doing so.

And on account of stealing, *the wise*, upon investigating, would *blame me*, too.

On account of stealing, with the body’s breaking up, after death, *a suffering state* would be expected.

7.4 Indeed, this very **stealing** is a fetter, a mental hindrance.

And dependent on *stealing*, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from stealing, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on taking only the given, stealing should be abandoned.*’

8 (3) TRUTH-TELLING. “**Dependent on truth-telling, false speech should be abandoned,**” so it is said. In what connection is this said?

8.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

⁸³ See (1.2.2.1).

⁸⁴ *Yesam kho aham samyojananam hetu panatipati assam, tesaham samyojananam pahanaaya samucchadaya patipanno.*

⁸⁵ *Anuvicca’pi mam viññu garaheyyum panatipata, paccaya.*

⁸⁶ “With the body’s breaking up, after death,” *kāya, bhedassa param, maraṇā*. Buddhaghosa explains this phrase as foll: “With the body’s breaking up” (*kāyassa bheda*) means on abandoning the aggregates that are clung to; “after death” (*param, maraṇā*) means that in-between state (*tad-antaram*), in the grasping of the aggregates that have been generated (*abhinibbatta-k, khandha, gahaṇe*). Or, “with the body’s breaking up” means the interruption of the life-faculty, and “after death” means after the death-consciousness (*cuti, cittato uddham*). (Vism 13.91/427; cf NcA 69). See **Deva, dūta S** (M 130,2/3:178 @ SD 2.23).

⁸⁷ Each of the 8 conditions of practice follow this threefold rationale: the philosophical (right thinking), “I would surely blame myself”; the ethical, “the wise would blame me, too”; and the spiritual (or soteriological), “a suffering state would be expected (for me).” This also applies to §§7.3, 8.3, 9.3, 10.3, 11.3, 12.3 and 13.3. See (1.2).

⁸⁸ *Etad eva kho pana samyojanam etam nivaranaṃ yad idam panatipato.* On the significance of killing, etc, being regarded as both “fetters” and “hindrances,” see (1.2.2.1).

⁸⁹ *Ye ca panatipata, paccaya uppajjeyyum asava vighata, pariāhā, panatipatā pativiratassa evam sa te asava vighata, pariāhā na honti.*

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of *those fetters because of which I might speak falsely*.

8.3 For, if I were to speak falsely, *I would surely blame myself* for doing so.

And on account of false speech, *the wise*, upon investigating, would *blame me*, too.

On account of false speech, with the body’s breaking up, after death, *a suffering state* would be expected.

8.4 Indeed, this very false speech is a fetter, a mental hindrance. [362]

And dependent on false speech, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from false speech, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on truth-telling, false speech should be abandoned.*’

9 (4) NON-SLANDERING. “**Dependent on not slandering, slandering should be abandoned,**” so it is said. In what connection is this said?

9.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of *those fetters because of which I might slander*.

9.3 For, if I were to slander, *I would surely blame myself* for doing so.

And on account of slandering, *the wise*, upon investigating, would *blame me*, too.

On account of slandering, with the body’s breaking up, after death, *a suffering state* would be expected.

9.4 Indeed, this very *slandering* is a fetter, a mental hindrance.

And dependent on slandering, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from slandering, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on non-slandering, slandering should be abandoned.*’

10 (5) NO LUSTFUL DESIRE. “**Dependent on the lack of lustful desire, lustful desire should be abandoned,**” so it is said. In what connection is this said?

10.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of *those fetters because of which I might have lustful desire*.

10.3 For, if I were to have lustful desire, *I would surely blame myself* for doing so.

And on account of have lustful desire, *the wise*, upon investigating, would *blame me*, too.

On account of lustful desire, with the body’s breaking up, after death, *a suffering state* would be expected.

10.4 Indeed, this very *lustful desire* is a fetter, a mental hindrance.

And dependent on lustful desire, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from lustful desire, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on the lack of lustful desire, lustful desire should be abandoned.*’

11 (6) NO ANGRY BLAMING. “**Dependent on the lack of angry blaming, angry blaming should be abandoned,**” so it is said. In what connection is this said?

11.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of *those fetters because of which I might show angry blaming*.

11.3 For, if I were to show angry blaming, *I would surely blame myself* for doing so.

And on account of angry blaming, *the wise*, upon investigating, would *blame me*, too.

On account of angry blaming, with the body’s breaking up, after death, *a suffering state* would be expected.

11.4 Indeed, this very *angry blaming* is a fetter, a mental hindrance.

And dependent on angry blaming, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from angry blaming, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on the lack of angry blaming, angry blaming should be abandoned.*’

12 (7) NO ANGRY DESPAIR. “**Dependent on the lack of angry despair, angry despair should be abandoned,**” so it is said. In what connection is this said?

12.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of *those fetters* [363] *because of which I might have angry despair.*

12.3 For, if I were to have angry despair, *I* would surely *blame myself* for doing so.

And on account of angry despair, the wise, upon investigating, would *blame me*, too.

On account of angry despair, with the body’s breaking up, after death, *a suffering state* would be expected.

12.4 Indeed, this very angry despair is a fetter, a mental hindrance.

And dependent on angry despair, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from angry despair, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on the lack of angry despair, angry despair should be abandoned.*’

13 (8) NON-ARROGANCE. “**Dependent on non-arrogance, arrogance should be abandoned,**” so it is said. In what connection is this said?

13.2 Here, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus.

‘I’m practising for the sake of abandoning and uprooting of *those fetters* *because of which I might be arrogant.*

13.3 For, if I were to be arrogant, *I* would surely *blame myself* for doing so.

And on account of being arrogant, *the wise*, upon investigating, would *blame me*, too.

On account of being arrogant, with the body’s breaking up, after death, *a suffering state* would be expected.

13.4 Indeed, this very *arrogance* is a fetter, a mental hindrance.

And dependent on arrogance, influxes, vexation and fever would arise,

but for one who **abstains** from arrogance, there would be no influxes, vexation or fever.’

So, it is in this connection that it is said, ‘*Dependent on non-arrogance, arrogance should be abandoned.*’ [364]

14 These, houselord, are *the 8 conditions* that conduce to the cutting off of business in the noble discipline that have been elaborated, *explained in detail.*

14.2 But, in the noble one’s discipline, **this is not at all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way.**⁹⁰

The 4 alls

14.3 “**But how, bhante, is there all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way?**⁹¹

It would be good for me, bhante, if the Blessed One were to show me the Dharma of *all* the cutting off of *all* business in the *all* in *every* way.”

⁹⁰ *Na tv-eva tāva ariyassa vinaye sabbena sabbam sabbathā sabbam vohāra, samucchedo hotīti.* This is the Sutta’s key statement: see Intro (2.2).

⁹¹ This is Potaliya’s second Dharma question, the answer to which covers both the trainings in mental cultivation [§§15-21] and in wisdom [§§22-24]. He asks his first Dharma question at [§3.8].

“In that case, houselord, listen, pay careful attention. I will speak.”⁹²

“Yes, bhante,” the houselord Potaliya replied to the Blessed One.

II. TRAINING IN MENTAL CULTIVATION

The Blessed One said this,

(1) The parable of the bone

15 Suppose, houselord, **a dog**, overcome by hunger and weakness, were to wait by a cow slaughterer’s shambles.⁹³

Then, a skilled cow slaughterer or his apprentice were to toss to the dog a bare bone, well-cut and scraped, bereft of meat, blood-smear.⁹⁴

What do you think, houselord? Would that dog, gnawing at *the bare bone, well-cut and scraped, bereft of meat, blood-smear*, be rid of his hunger and weakness?”

“Not at all, bhante.”

15.2 “What is the reason for this?”

“Because, bhante, it is but *a bare bone, well-cut and scraped, bereft of meat, blood-smear*. Eventually, the dog would only have its share of tiredness and vexation.”⁹⁵

15.3 “Even so, houselord, a noble disciple reflects thus,

‘**Sensual pleasures** have been spoken of by the Blessed One as being comparable to a bare bone. They are of great suffering, of much despair, there’s more peril here.’”

15.4 Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,⁹⁶

and cultivates **the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness**, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains.⁹⁷

(2) The parable of the piece of meat

16 Suppose, houselord, **a vulture, or a heron, or a hawk**, having seized a piece of meat, were to fly off.⁹⁸ Then, (other) vultures, or herons, or hawks, relentlessly pursuing it, were to peck and tug at it.⁹⁹

What do you think, houselord? If that vulture, or heron, or hawk, were not to at once let go of *that piece of meat*, wouldn’t it meet with death or deadly pain on that account?”¹⁰⁰

⁹² This announcement recurs at §3.10 + §5.2. They occur thrice altogether, which is unique to this Sutta: see [2.1.2].

⁹³ *Seyyathā’pi gahapati kukkuro jighacchā, dubbalya, pareto go, ghātaka, sūnaṃ paccupaṭṭhito assa*. This parable is alluded to in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,3.5), SD 3.13, parable (1). See Intro (3.1.2).

⁹⁴ *Tam enaṃ dakkho go, ghātaka vā go, ghātak’antevāsī vā aṭṭhi, kaṅkalāṃ sunikanta, nikantaṃ* [Ce so; Be *sunikantaṃ nikkantaṃ*; Ee Se *sunikantaṃ nikantaṃ*] *nimmamsaṃ lohita, makkhitaṃ upacchubheyya* [Ce Ee so; Be *upasumbheyya*; Ke Se *upacchūbheyya*; Be (Ka) *upaccumbheyya*].

⁹⁵ *Yāvadeva pana so kukkuro kilamathassa vighātassa bhāgī assāti*.

⁹⁶ *Evam etaṃ yathā, bhūtaṃ samma-p, paññāya disvā yāyaṃ upekkhā nānattā nānatta, sitā taṃ abhinivajjetvā*. On **equanimity** (*upekkhā*) here, see Intro (2.4.1; 3.2).

⁹⁷ *Yāyaṃ upekkhā ekattā ekatta, sitā yattha sabbaso lok’āmisūpādānā aparisesā nirujjhanti tam evūpekkhaṃ bhāveti*. On **equanimity** (*upekkhā*) here, see Intro (2.4.1; 3.2). On **sabbaso**, see Sn:N 224 n288.

⁹⁸ *Seyyathāpi gahapati gijjho vā kaṅko vā kulalo vā maṃsa, pesiṃ ādāya uḍḍayeyya* [Ee Se so; Be Ce *uḍḍīyeyya*]. This parable is alluded to in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,3.5), SD 3.13, parable (2). See Intro (3.1.2).

⁹⁹ *Tam enaṃ gijjhā’pi kaṅkā’pi kulalā’pi anupattivā anupattivā vitaccheyyūṃ visajjeyyūṃ* [Ce so; Be *vissajjeyyūṃ*; Ce Ee Ke Se *virājeyyūṃ*]. **Vitaccheyyūṃ** comes fr *vitaccheti* (*vi* + *taccheti*), “to tear, pluck, pick to pieces,” M 54,16.1 (+ *virājeti*) = S 19.1/2:255,12, of a skeleton-preta (Ee has *vibhajeti* for *virājeti*) = V 3:105,37, of a “meat-lump” preta (id). In the last two cases, they were each pursued by “vultures, crows, hawks...pecking and tugging at it...while it cried out in distress.” (*tam enaṃ gijjhā’pi kākā’pi kulalā’pi anupattitva anupattitvā phāsul’antarikāhi* vitacchenti virājenti sāssudam aṭṭa-s, saram karoti*): *”in between the ribs,” only in S. See Intro (3.1.2).

“It would, bhante.”

16.2 “Even so, houselord, the noble disciple reflects thus,

‘*Sensual pleasures* have been spoken of by the Blessed One as being comparable to a piece of meat. They are of great suffering, of much despair, there’s more peril here.’ [365]

16.3 *Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,*

and cultivates the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains.

(3) The parable of the grass-torch

17 Suppose, houselord, **a man** were to hold a blazing grass-torch.¹⁰¹

What do you think, houselord? If that man were not to at once let go of that blazing grass-torch, wouldn’t it burn his hand, or his arm, or some parts of his body, so that he would meet with death or deadly pain on that account?”

“He would, bhante.”

17.2 “Even so, houselord, the noble disciple reflects thus,

‘*Sensual pleasures* have been spoken of by the Blessed One as being comparable to a grass-torch. They are of great suffering, of much despair, there’s more peril here.’

17.3 *Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,*

and cultivates the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains.

(4) The parable of the fiery coal pit

18 Suppose, houselord, there were **a charcoal pit**, deeper than a man’s height, full of fiery coal with neither flame nor smoke.¹⁰²

Then, comes along a man, who loves life and loves not death, who loves comfort and hates pain.¹⁰³

Two strong men would then, seizing him by both arms, drag him to that fiery coal pit.

What do you think, houselord? Wouldn’t that man twist his body about here and there?”¹⁰⁴

“He would, bhante.”

18.2 “Why is that so?”

“Because, bhante, that man knows that if he were to *fall into that fiery coal pit*, he would meet with death or deadly pain on that account.”

18.3 “Even so, houselord, the noble disciple reflects thus,

‘*Sensual pleasures* have been spoken of by the Blessed One as being comparable to a fiery coal pit. They are of great suffering, of much despair, there’s more peril here.’

18.4 *Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,*

and cultivates the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains.

¹⁰⁰ *Tam kim maññasi, gahapati, sace so gijjho vā kañko vā kulalo vā tam mamsapesim na khippameva paṭinissaj-jeyya, so tato, nidānaṃ maraṇaṃ vā nigaccheyya maraṇa, mattaṃ vā dukkhaṃ ti?*

¹⁰¹ *Seyyathā pi gahapati puriso ādittam tiṇ’ukkaṃ ādāya paṭivātaṃ gaccheyya.* This parable is alluded to in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,3.5), SD 3.13, parable (3). See Intro (3.1.2).

¹⁰² *Seyyathā pi gahapati aṅgārakāsu sādhiḥka, porisā, pūrā aṅgārānaṃ vitaccikānaṃ vitadhūmānaṃ.* This parable is alluded to in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,3.5), SD 3.13, parable (4). See Intro (3.1.2).

¹⁰³ *Atha puriso āgaccheyya jīvitū, kāmo amaritū, kāmo sukha, kāmo dukkha, paṭikkūlo.*

¹⁰⁴ *Tam enaṃ dve balavanto purisā nānā, bāhāsu gahetvā aṅgārakāsuṃ upakaḍḍheyyuṃ.*

(5) The parable of the dream

19 Suppose, houselord, a man were to dream of lovely parks, lovely forests, lovely spots, lovely lotus lakes.¹⁰⁵

But upon waking, he would see none of these.¹⁰⁶

19.2 “Even so, houselord, the noble disciple reflects thus,

‘*Sensual pleasures* have been spoken of by the Blessed One as being comparable to a dream. They are of great suffering, of much despair, there’s more peril here.”

19.3 *Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,*

and cultivates the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains.

(6) The parable of borrowed goods

20 Suppose, houselord, a man had borrowed some goods, [366] such as a fashionable vehicle, or fine jeweled ear-rings.¹⁰⁷

This man, with such borrowed goods before him and surrounding him, would go about in the middle of the shopping area.¹⁰⁸

People, seeing him, would say thus,

‘What a wealthy man indeed! This is how, it is said, the wealthy enjoy their wealth!’

Now, when the owners were to see that man, *wouldn’t they take back their things right then?”*

“Yes, bhante, they would.”

20.2 “What is the reason for this?”

“The owners, bhante, take back *what is theirs.*”¹⁰⁹

20.3 “Even so, houselord, the noble disciple reflects thus,

‘*Sensual pleasures* have been spoken of by the Blessed One as being comparable to borrowed goods. They are of great suffering, of much despair, there’s more peril here.”

20.4 *Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,*

and cultivates the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains.

(7) The parable of the fruit-laden tree

21 Suppose, houselord, not far away from a village or market-town there were a thick forest grove.¹¹⁰

Therein, there were a tree full of fruit, rich with fruit, but *none of them had fallen on the ground.*¹¹¹

Then, a man were to come along, desirous of fruits, looking for fruits, seeking fruits.

Having plunged into that forest grove, he would to see that tree, full of fruit, rich with fruit.

Then, it occurred to him,

¹⁰⁵ *Seyyathā’pi gahapati puriso supinakaṃ passeyya ārāma,rāmaṇeyyakaṃ vana,rāmaṇeyyakaṃ bhūmi,rāmaṇeyyakaṃ pokkharāṇi,rāmaṇeyyakaṃ.* This parable is alluded to in **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,3.5), SD 3.13, parable (5). See Intro (3.1.2).

¹⁰⁶ *So paṭibuddho na kiñci paṭipasseyya.*

¹⁰⁷ *Seyyathā’pi gahapati puriso yācitakāṃ bhogaṃ yācitvā yānaṃ vā poriseyyaṃ* [Ce Ee Ka so Be poriseyyaṃ; Ke Se oro peyya] *pavara,maṇi,kuṇḍalaṃ.* This parable is alluded to in **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,3.5), SD 3.13, parable (6). See Intro (3.1.2).

¹⁰⁸ *So tehi yācitatehi bhogehi purakkhato parivuto antarāpaṇaṃ paṭipajjeyya.*

¹⁰⁹ *Sāmino hi bhante sāni harantīti*

¹¹⁰ *Seyyathā’pi gahapati gāmassa vā nigamassa vā avidūre tibbo vana,saṇḍo.* This parable is alluded to in **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,3.5), SD 3.13, parable (6). See Intro (3.1.2).

¹¹¹ *Tatr’assa rukkho sampanna,phalo ca upapanna,phalo ca, na c’assu kānici phalāni bhūmiyaṃ patitāni.*

‘This tree is full of fruit, rich with fruit, but none of them had fallen on the ground. But I know how to climb a tree.

What now if I were to *climb this tree and eat whatever fruit I wish and were to fill up my clothes with them?*¹¹²

So he climbed that tree and ate whatever fruit he wished and filled up his clothes with them.

21.2 Then, a second man were to come along, desirous of fruits, looking for fruits, seeking fruits, and bearing a sharp axe.

Then, that man, having plunged into that forest grove, were to see that tree, full of fruit, rich with fruit.

Then, it occurred to him,

‘This tree is full of fruit, rich with fruit, but none of them had fallen on the ground. But I *do not* know how to climb a tree.

What now if I were to *cut this tree at its root, and then eat whatever fruit I wish and were to fill up my clothes with them.*

Then, he would cut down the tree at its root.

21.3 What do you think, houselord? If that first man who climbed up the tree were not to descend at once, when the tree falls, *wouldn't he break a hand, or a leg, or some part or other of his body, and so [367] suffer death or deadly pain* on that account?’

“He would, bhante.”

21.4 “Even so, houselord, the noble disciple reflects thus,

‘*Sensual pleasures* have been spoken of by the Blessed One as being comparable to fruit-laden tree. They are of great suffering, of much despair, there’s more peril here.”

21.5 *Having seen thus according to true reality, with right wisdom, he rejects the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity,*

and cultivates the equanimity that is unified [become one], based on oneness, where clinging to material things of the world utterly ceases without any remains.

III. WISDOM TRAINING

The noble disciple’s 3 knowledges

(1) RECOLLECTION OF PAST LIVES.¹¹³

22 Now, houselord, that noble disciple, who has arrived at this very same **supreme mindfulness** whose purity is due to equanimity,¹¹⁴

recollects manifold past existence,

that is to say, 1 birth, 2 births, 3 births, 4 births, 5 births,

10 births, 20 births, 30 births, 40 births, 50 births,

100 births, 1,000 births, 100,000 births,

many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion,

many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, thus:

‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance.

Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such the end of my life.

Passing away from that state, I re-arose there.

There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance.

¹¹² *Yan nūnāhaṃ imaṃ rukkhaṃ ārohitvā yāva-d-atthañ ca khādeyyaṃ ucchaṅgañ ca pūreyyan’ti.*

¹¹³ *Pubbe,nivāsanānussati*, lit “recollection of past abiding [existence].” The remainder of this is expanded into 4 sections in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,1.31-34/1:13-), SD 25.3(76.3) and 3 sections in **Sampasādaniya S** (D 27,15-17/3:-107-112), SD 10.12. In both cases, each explains how the eternalist view arose.

¹¹⁴ *Sa kho so gahapati ariya,sāvako imaṃ yeva anuttaraṃ upekkhā,sati,pārisuddhiṃ āgamma.* This same pericope also describes the attainment at the beginning of the following 2 knowledges.

Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such my life-span.

Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’

Thus,¹¹⁵ bhikshus, he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes and details.

(2) KNOWLEDGE OF HOW BEINGS FARE ACCORDING TO KARMA¹¹⁶

23 Now, houselord, that noble disciple, who has arrived at **this very same supreme mindfulness** whose purity is due to equanimity,

he sees—by means of **the divine eye** [clairvoyance],¹¹⁷ purified and surpassing the human—
beings passing away and re-arising,

and he knows how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate,
in the heavens, in the suffering states, faring in accordance with their karma:

‘These beings, alas, sirs—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who reviled the noble ones,

held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—
with the body’s breaking up, after death,

have re-arisen in a plane of misery, a bad destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But these beings, sirs—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who did not revile the noble ones,

who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—
with the body’s breaking up, after death, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

Thus, by means of the divine eye, thus purified, surpassing the human, he sees beings passing away
and re-arising, and understands how they fare according to their karma.

(4) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INFLUXES¹¹⁸

24 Now, houselord, that noble disciple, who has arrived at **this very same supreme mindfulness** whose purity is due to equanimity,

by realizing for himself through direct knowledge, has attained and dwells in the liberation of mind
and the liberation by wisdom that are influx-free with the destruction of the influxes.¹¹⁹

The true uprooting of all business

25 To that extent, houselord, there is **all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way**.¹²⁰

25.2 What do you think, houselord, concerning all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way of the noble one—do you see it in the cutting off of your own business?”

¹¹⁵ *Iti*.

¹¹⁶ *Cutūpapāta ñāṇa*, or “knowledge of rebirth according to karma” (*yathā,kammūpaga ñāṇa*), or “the divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*): see foll n.

¹¹⁷ *Dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §104). On the relationship of this knowledge to the 62 grounds for wrong views, see **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1), SD 25.3(76.3). See prec n.

¹¹⁸ *Āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*. The term *āsava* (lit “cankers”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints”, RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kāma’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhava’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjā’sava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These four are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of three influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

¹¹⁹ The whole section: *Sa kho so gaha,pati ariya,sāvako imaṃ yeva anuttaraṃ upekkhā,sati,pārisuddhiṃ āgamma āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ ceto,vimuttiṃ paññā,vimuttiṃ diṭṭh’eva dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasam-pajja viharati*.

¹²⁰ This concludes the teaching that starts at §14.1 on the “4 alls.”

Potaliya's lion-roar

25.3 “Who am I, bhante, to have *all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way of the noble one?*

Far indeed am I, bhante, from *all the cutting off of all business in the all in every way of the noble one.*

25.4 For, bhante, in **the past**, though the wanderers of other sects were *not* thoroughbreds at all, but we thought them to be so;¹²¹
 though they were *not* thoroughbreds at all,¹²² but we fed them with the food for thoroughbreds;¹²³
 though they were *not* thoroughbreds at all, but we put them in the places for thoroughbreds.¹²⁴

25.5 But, as for the monks, bhante, they were *truly* thoroughbreds, but we imagined them not to be so;¹²⁵
 they were *truly* thoroughbreds, but we fed them with the food for non-thoroughbreds;¹²⁶
 they were *truly* thoroughbreds, but we put them in places for non-thoroughbreds.¹²⁷

25.6 But **now**, bhante, [368] the wanderers of other sects are *not* thoroughbreds at all, and we will know them to be so;¹²⁸
 they are not thoroughbreds at all, and we will feed them with the food for non-thoroughbreds;¹²⁹
 they are not thoroughbreds at all, and we will put them in the places for non-thoroughbreds.¹³⁰

25.7 As for **the monks**, bhante, **they are truly thoroughbreds,** **and we will know them as thoroughbreds.**¹³¹
they are truly thoroughbreds, **and we will feed them with the food for thoroughbreds.**¹³²
they are truly thoroughbreds, **and we will put them in the places for thoroughbreds.**¹³³

25.8 Indeed, bhante, you have inspired in me a love for recluses in the recluses, a faith for recluses in the recluses, a respect for recluses in the recluses.¹³⁴

Potaliya goes for refuge

26 Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante!
 Just as if, bhante,
 one were to place upright what had been overturned, or
 were to reveal what was hidden, or
 were to show the way to one who was lost, or
 were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,

¹²¹ *Anājānīy'eva samāne ājānīyā'ti amaññimha,*

¹²² On usages of “thoroughbred” (*ājānīya*): as “thoroughbred horse,” *ass'ājānīya* (**Bhaddāli S**, M 65.32 @ SD 56.2; **Ass'ājānīya S**, A 8.13; **Na-p,piya S**, A 10.87,9); the virtuous as “thoroughbred person,” *puris'ājānīya* (**Sandha S**, A 11.9). On 9 kinds of person who are like horses, see also (**Navaka**) **Assa Khaluṅka S** (A 9.22).

¹²³ *Anājānīy'eva samāne ājānīya,bhojanaṃ bhojīmha,*

¹²⁴ *Anājānīy'eva samāne ājānīya,thāne thapīmha.*

¹²⁵ *Ājānīy'eva samāne anājānīyā'ti amaññimha,*

¹²⁶ *Ājānīy'eva samāne anājānīya,bhojanaṃ bhojīmha.*

¹²⁷ *Ājānīy'eva samāne anājānīya,thāne thapīmha.*

¹²⁸ *Anājānīy'eva samāne anājānīyā'ti jānissāma*

¹²⁹ *Anājānīy'eva samāne anājānīya,bhojanaṃ bhojessāma.,*

¹³⁰ *Anājānīy'eva samāne anājānīya,thāne thapessāma.*

¹³¹ *Ājānīy'eva samāne ājānīyāti jānissāma.*

¹³² *Ājānīy'eva samāne ājānīya,bhojanaṃ bhojessāma.*

¹³³ *Ājānīy'eva samāne ājānīya,thāne thapessāma.*

¹³⁴ *Ajanesi vata me bhante bhagavā samaṇesu samaṇa-p,pemaṃ, samaṇesu samaṇa-p,pasādaṃ, samaṇesu samaṇa,gāravāṃ. Ajanesi* is aor 3 sg of *janeti* or *janayati*, “to produce” (DP sv √JAN): V 2:17,15; M 2:177,9; J 6:213,-16*, 485,11*; VA 5:17; Mahv 22.7. Potaliya's exacting language highlights that now he truly knows the proper or true faith, love and respect for recluses (*samaṇa*), ie, the Buddhist monastics. Cf Caṅkī's sentiments: **Caṅkī S** (M 95,34.2), SD 21.15, where the line recurs.

in the same way, in numerous ways, the Dharma has been declared by master Gotama.

26.2 I, bhante, go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.

May the Blessed One remember me as a layman who has gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life.”

— evaṃ —

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